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A summary of the various interpretations of *Beowulf* 489-490, given by Professor W. J. Sedgefield (*Beowulf*, 2nd ed., Manchester, 1913), will serve to introduce the following discussion:

489. *on sælum teo sigehreð secgum*, 'joyfully award victory to warriors,' a flattering phrase. The ms. reading *onsæl meoto* used to be translated 'unbind thy thoughts,' *meoto* being regarded as the plur. of *met*. But *met* occurs nowhere else, and moreover, as Holthausen points out, the imperat. *onsæl* could not in this position take the chief stress. Holthausen also reads *on sælum*, following Kemble, and suggests *weota*, imperat. of *weotian* = *witian*, meaning 'determine,' 'appoint.' Klaeber reads *on sæl meota sigehreð secga*. 'joyfully think of victory of warriors.' Equally plausible would be *on sæl nota*, 'at the right time (or, 'to good purpose') make use of victory for warriors.'

Several clauses from the latest summary of this matter, in the Wyatt-Chambers edition of the poem (1914), will make the statement of the problem sufficiently complete for the present purpose. After the observation that the ms. reading has in the past been generally defended by taking *onsæl* as imperative, and *meoto* as "some word, not elsewhere recorded, meaning either 'measure,' 'thought,' or 'speech': so *onsæl meoto* = 'relax the ties of etiquette,' or 'unknit thy thoughts,'" the comment follows:

"The difficulty is that a verb, unless emphatic, should not take the alliteration. Those who retain the ms. reading generally take *sigehreð* as an adj. = *sige-hreðig*, 'victory famed' (. . . but it is surely a noun), or make *sigehreðsecgum* one word. [Klaeber's rendering is preferred, 'in joyful time think upon victory of men.'] The verb **metian* is not elsewhere recorded, but may be inferred from the Goth. *mitōn*, 'consider.'"

The later scholars thus find two principal hindrances to the acceptance of the ms. reading, the strong (alliterative) stress of an imperative (*onsæl*), and the form and meaning of *meoto*. A third difficulty is seen by some in the adjective function of *sige-hreð*. These points shall be considered in the order indicated.

Professor Holthausen's emphatic denial of the possibility of construing *onsæl* as an imperative has carried conviction to some critics. His confident declaration is this: "Die beliebte übersetzung . . . 'und entseile die gedanken' ist schon deshalb unmög-

lich, weil sie gegen die grundregeln der metrik verstösst! Im zweiten halbvers kann bekanntlich das verbum nur dann vor dem nomen allitterieren, wenn eine schilderung vorliegt" (*Z. f. d. Phil.* xxxvii, 114). Persuaded by this, Professor Klaeber (*J. of E. and G. Phil.* vi, 192) writes, "The interpretation of this veritable *cruz* has been materially advanced by Holthausen, who . . . properly restored the nounal character of (*on*)*sæl* and thus effectively disposed of several fanciful solutions." However, a true scholar like Professor Klaeber is not easily swung out of his orbit, and a foot-note is added by him to show that the imperative does, in fact, take the alliterative stress in the second half-line of 2163 and 2664, but he is too cautious when he points out as a condition the detail "followed by *call(es)*."

As a mode of procedure, one may first make an inductive examination of the rhythmic value of the imperative in *Beowulf*. The classification of the occurrences will not elicit a controversy as to the application of the rules of scansion; ambiguity of rhythmic form will be duly pointed out.

Imperatives under the first metrical stress in the first half-line

<i>brūc þisses bēages</i>	1217a	<i>Bio nū on ofeste</i>	2748a
<i>cen þec mid cræfte</i>	1220a	<i>Gemyne mārðo</i>	660a
<i>waca wið wrāðum</i>	661a	<i>site nū tō symle</i>	489a
<i>Onfōh þissum fulle</i>	1170a	<i>gesaga him ēac wordum</i>	388a
<i>heald þū nū hrūse</i>	2248a	<i>Bebeorh þē þone bealo-nīð</i>	1759a
<i>geþenc nū, sē mæra</i>	1475a	<i>Arīs, rīces weard!</i>	1391a
<i>Gā nū to setle</i>	1783a	<i>Ne sorga, snotor guma!</i>	1385a
<i>Hafa nū and geheald</i>	659a	<i>Ne frīn þū æfter sǣlum!</i>	1323a
<i>Bēo þū on ofeste</i>	386a	<i>Hātað heaðo-mære</i>	2803a

The metrical stress may be questioned at most only in the four instances at the end of this list. Of these the first two are, however, made secure by the accentual coördination of imperative and vocative; the third, by the enclitic character of *Ne*; but the last may perhaps *not* be secured by the double alliteration, the presumption being in favor of associating this instance with the undisputed occurrences of the imperative in the initial thesis of the first half-line, which are the following:

<i>Onsend Higelāce</i>	452a	<i>lātað hilde-bord</i>	397a
<i>Wæs þū Hrōðgār hāl</i>	407a	<i>Wes þū mund-bora</i>	1481a
<i>Bēo wið Gēatas glæd</i>	1174a		

The imperatives occurring in the first thesis of the second half-line are appropriately added here:

<i>hāt</i> [pæt] in gāe (edd., gangan)	<i>heald</i> forð tela	949b	
386b	<i>Gewitað</i> forð beran	291b	
<i>Bēo</i> þū suna mīnum	1227b	<i>Wes</i> þū ūs lārena gōd!	269b

Reverting to the first half-line, there remain two instances of the occurrence of an imperative under the second metrical stress:

<i>gum-cyste ongīt</i>	1724a	<i>Ond</i> þū Unferð lēt	1489a
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It remains now to bring together the stressed imperatives of the second half-line. These shall be exhibited in two lists.

Imperatives under the first metrical stress of the second half-line

<i>brūc</i> þenden þū mōte	1178b	<i>Dōð</i> swā ic bidde	1232b
<i>Wes</i> , þenden þū lifige	1225b	<i>fremmað</i> gē nū	2801b
<i>Brūc</i> ealles well	2163b	þū þē lēar be þon	1723b
<i>lēst</i> eall tela	2664b	ond <i>onsæl</i> m . . .	489b
ond <i>geþēoh</i> tela	1219b		

Imperatives under the second metrical stress of the second half-line

<i>Higelāce onsend!</i>	1484b	symbol-wynne <i>drēoh</i>	1783b
<i>Nō</i> þū him wearne <i>getēoh</i>	366b	ond þyssum cnýhtum <i>wes</i>	1220b
ond þisses hrægles <i>nēot</i>	1218b	þū on sǣlum <i>wes</i>	1171b
mægen-ellen <i>cýð</i>	660b	ond tō Gēatum <i>spræc</i>	1172b
ond þē þæt sēlre <i>gecēos</i>	1760b	ond þinum mǣgum <i>læf</i>	1179b
<i>Ofer-hýda</i> ne <i>gým</i>	1761b		

These lists from *Beowulf* are here offered to serve a wider purpose than that of the specific argument; from them may be inferred the complete convention of the rhythmic use of imperatives in Anglo-Saxon. However, in the circumstances in which an imperative comes to be used there is often occasion for sustaining the form in a succession of lines (or only in both halves of one line) by accretion or iteration. This stylistic feature, not shown in the lists, is important enough to be noticed here. It is found, for example, in *Beowulf* 659-661; 1170-1172; 1217-1220; and *Finnsburg* 10-12, which is noticeable, moreover, for two instances of an imperative (lines 10 and 12) in the first half-line with exclusive alliteration:

Ac *omvacnigeað* nū wīgend mīne,
habbað ēowre handa *hicgeað* on ellen,
winnað on orde, *wesað* on mōde!

For another detail one may notice two closely related passages of *Genesis* (1512-1514; 1532-1535), which preclude the attribution of rhythmic variation to any other cause than the exigency of the poet's art; here the imperative *fyllað* has two positions in the line (*cf.* also 196):

Tȳmað nū and *tiedrað*, tīres brūcað
mid gefēan fryðo! *fyllað* eorðan,
eall *geiceað*!

Wēaxað and *wrīdað*, wilna brūcað,
āra on eorðan! æðelum *fyllað*
ēowre fromcynne foldan scēatas,
tēamum and tūdre!

It is not necessary to enlarge on the plain inferences to be drawn from the foregoing citations. The outstanding features of the rhythmic use of the imperative are manifestly these: (1) the imperative occurs most frequently at the beginning of the line, and oftenest under the stress; (2) next in frequency of occurrence are the stressed imperatives in the second half-line, distributed about equally under the first and the second stresses; (3) some of the less significant imperatives are subordinated to the first thesis in either half-line (the occurrences are not numerous, for these may also be placed under the last stress of the second half-line, and exceptionally under that of the first half-line).

Turning now from the results of an inductive examination of the rhythmic use of the imperative in Anglo-Saxon verse (as shown in *Beowulf*), it will be found that a deductive procedure leads to a confirmation and, what is more, to an adequate explanation of the same results.

Germanic alliterative verse (chiefly Anglo-Saxon and Old Saxon) is held to give the clearest exhibit of certain principles of sentence-accent. These principles are therefore available as a postulate for verification in a selected text. Deductively, then, it would be expected to find the finite form of the verb unstressed or lightly stressed in the principal clause, and the stronger stress to fall as regularly on the finite verb of the subordinate clause. The verb in the principal clause may, on occasions, be emphatic in sense and

alliterate, this special emphasis being most commonly secured by placing the verb at the beginning of the sentence. Now, what is thus exceptional in the case of the finite verb must be held to be exclusive of the imperative, which converts the exception into a rule, for the imperative is regularly placed at the beginning of the sentence and demands the sentence-accent.¹

There is, of course, in Germanic verse a margin of variation, which does not, however, obscure the general observance of the rules of sentence-accent.² With reference now to the imperatives in the lists given above, it is seen that in *Beowulf* the poet has managed these forms with as close adherence to the accentual law of this special category as could be expected, considering the exigencies of his difficult art-form. This reference to the lists given above unites the two methods of inquiry here pursued in the common result of an incontrovertibly strong presumption in favor of retaining *onsæl* (line 489) as an imperative, in agreement with the earlier critics, who rightly attributed the difficulty of the clause to the form of the object of the verb. Undoubtedly, if *meoto* were a known substantive, the question of the fitness of the stressed imperative would never have been raised. At all events, with this conviction in mind, the preceding digression on the imperative has been offered principally for the wider purpose of directing

¹ "Das Verbum war vollbetont, wenn es an der Spitze des Satzes stand. Dies wird wahrscheinlich gemacht durch Keltisch und Germanisch. . . . Vor allem stand das Verbum im Imperativ an der Spitze, ganz naturgemäss" (Hermann Hirt, *Der Indogermanische Akzent*, Strassburg, Karl J. Trübner, 1895, p. 309). See Hirt's complete chapter on the subject, in which it is shown that the Germanic alliterative verse conserves this principle of sentence-accent "als altes Erbgut." It is important to observe the confirmatory fact that the imperative and the vocative are associated in this doctrine of sentence-position and accentual weight, and that proper names are *ipso facto* vocatives, as I have elsewhere shown for Anglo-Saxon verse (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, XIV, 347-368).

² "Bei diesen abstufungen des natürlichen accents handelt es sich selbstverständlich um *relative verhältnisse*, da der satzaccent nicht absolut fest ist, sondern durch einfluss des rhythmischen schemas modifiziert werden kann" (E. Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, Halle, Max Niemeyer, 1893, p. 26. The entire division, "Grundlagen der altgerm. metrik," pp. 18-49, is of first-class importance in connection with this discussion, altho Sievers does not in § 24 separate for special treatment the imperatives from the other finite forms of the verb).

attention to principles of accent that are not always well understood by students of the old poetry. Otherwise the discussion would have been confined within the limits of a proposed explanation of the ms. reading *meoto*.

Assuming the form *meoto* to constitute the "veritable *crux*," it may be subjected to scrutiny with reference to a probable paleographic error. From this point of view, one is not unprepared for an erroneous interchange of *c* and *t*, and this similarity in the form of the letters admits as a third member the vowel *o*, as seen in the *Beowulf* ms. at line 3146 (*swicðole*, for *swioðole*). It was possible for the scribe, therefore, to write *meoto* for *mecto* or for *metto* (not to devise other possible combinations of the letters). Now *mëtto*, thus obtained, is just the word to meet the sense read into the clause by the earlier critics. In the simple form it is not reported to occur elsewhere (tho it may yet be found), but it is frequent enough in the compound *ofer-mëtto*. The meaning it must have in the simple form is to be inferred from its character as an abstract noun based on *mōd*. The stem of the abstract noun is in *-īpa*, and the development is regular from **mōdīpa* to *mëtto* (see Sievers, *Beiträge* I, 501 and V, 134 note 1). Not to argue the question of the meaning of *mëtto*, which is sufficiently given in the character of the form, one may observe, as close synonyms of the abstract *mëtto*, such words as *mōd-gehygd* and *mōd-geþanc*, and the equivalence of *ofer-hygd* and *ofer-mëtto*, which, taken together, show that *mëtto* is synonymous with *gehygd* and *geþanc*.

As to the grammatical function of *sige-hrēð*, the remaining point to be considered here, there is no need to hesitate in construing the word as an adjective. 'Possessive compounds' like *glæd-mōd*, *glēaw-mōd*, *ofer-mōd*, and *yrre-mōd* are equivalent to forms, with which these are used interchangeably, in *-mōdīg*. So too *sige-hrēð* as an adjective is a proper variant of *sige-hrēðīg*.

Summing up the results thus obtained, the lines in question are a well-constructed expression of the royal injunction: 'Take thy place at the table, and do thou, victory-famous one, disclose to these men what thou hast in mind, so far as thy wisdom may urge.' A noticeable stylistic feature of these lines is a symmetry in the distribution of the parts of the injunction that represents the poet's best manner. It is also conventionally compact. In a passage by another hand (Grein-Wülker, II, p. 123, ll. 95-97) this compactness

is somewhat less rigidly observed, but the poet has an injunction to express that is sufficiently similar to that of the lines in *Beowulf*, and he does this in so similar a fashion as to supply confirmation of the results of this discussion:

Nū ic þē hāte, hæleð min sē lēofa,
 þæt ðū þās gesyhðe secge mannum:
 onwreoh wordum þæt hit is wuldres bēam

In comparing passages so disconnected, it is not permitted to be dogmatic; but a code of conventionalities is observed in all Anglo-Saxon verse with a degree of uniformity that favors such a comparison, if it be kept within pliant limits. It is, therefore, not altogether inappropriate to refer to the second passage for confirmation of the assumed construction both of *sige-hrēð* and of *secgum*; and *onwreoh* is equally confirmative of *onsæl*. A further confirmation of *onsæl mētto* lies in its conformity to the conventional formula, in Anglo-Saxon verse, for expressing the *dis-closing* of one's mind. The formula, which arrested the attention of Grimm (*Andreas und Elene*, 1840, p. xxxix), is typically represented by *word-hord onlūcan*, and is sustained by verbs synonymous with *on-lūcan*: *onbindan*, *onspannan*, *onwrēon*, with which *onsælan* is also synonymous.

JAMES W. BRIGHT.

THE TOWNELEY PLAY OF THE DOCTORS AND THE *SPECULUM CHRISTIANI*

Dr. George C. Taylor in his paper, "The Relation of the English Corpus Christi Play to the Middle English Religious Lyric,"¹ has pointed out that a passage in the *Towneley Play of the Doctors* (xviii, 141-180) is based directly upon a metrical version of the Ten Commandments which was printed in *Reliquiae Antiquae* (I, 49-50) from Jesus Coll. Camb. ms. Q. G. 3. In view of the direct bearing of this discovery upon the much discussed problem of the relations of the cycles, it becomes a matter of some interest to assemble such evidence as is available concerning the poem in question.

¹ *Modern Philol.*, v, 1-38.